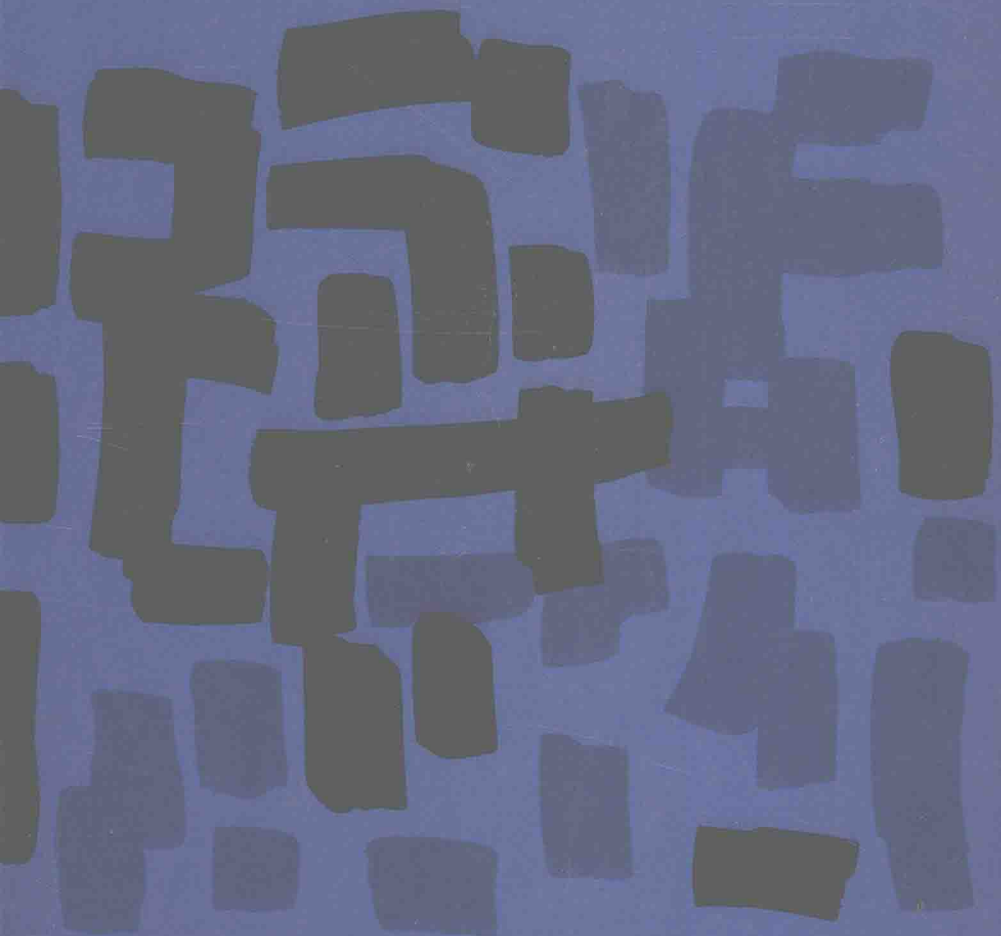
EDITED BY RAYMOND E. WOLFINGER

READINGS IN AMERICAN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Second Edition



FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN POLITICAL SCIENCE SERIES

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Edited by

RAYMOND E. WOLFINGER

Stanford University

To My Mother

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Robert A. Dahl, Editor

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PREFACE

This is a book of readings on the processes of American national government. The selections are based on empirical research or practical experience. Most of these articles are systematic and general treatments of recurring features of modern American politics; the others are case studies that illustrate important generalizations and evoke the mood and flavor of political life.

This focus on the systematic, empirical study of political processes excludes not only analyses of current policy issues, but also speculative essays, discussions of research methods, and conceptual schemes dealing with abstract variables. Everything in this book concerns what *is*, not what ought to be. There are no articles urging citizens to vote more intelligently or presidents to dedicate themselves to history rather than to politics. These selections describe; they do not cheer or deplore. This is not to shut moralism out of politics, much less out of political science. Nor does it betray a commitment to a clinical, "value-free" science of politics. What it does betray is a belief in the virtues of understanding the world as it is and a conviction that it is futile to seek the ideal without understanding the feasible. By "political behavior," then, I mean nothing more than the politically relevant perspectives and actions of individual persons, be they voters or presidents.

Thus, while these readings include many "behavioral" selections, they are not presented as examples of a certain species of political science. Rather, they reflect a mood or approach shared by many political scientists who would not consider themselves "behaviorists." (Indeed, among the contributors are a congressman, a law professor, and several journalists.) The chief elements in this approach are a desire to look past the formal structure of government to the reality of how politicians

actually think and work; a desire to ignore storybook notions of democracy for study of how the average citizen makes his voting decisions; and a desire to accumulate general knowledge rather than tell anecdotes that quickly become obsolete. The trend in this direction is firmly established in political science. The fruits of such research are already found in many textbooks on American government. But as the pace of research has accelerated, a gap has opened between what scholars have discovered and the material incorporated in even the most modern textbook. The selections in this reader deal with information and ideas that, for the most part, have not been presented in textbooks.

Most of the selections are reprinted intact, although some excerpts from books have been edited to delete repetitious or extraneous material or references to other chapters. Neither the subject matter nor the writing style is esoteric and numbers are used only to summarize facts.

The selections are grouped by conventional headings—Congress, the president, and so on—but most of them are germane to a variety of subjects. For example, the articles by Fenno and Wildavsky can be used together in studying either the appropriations process or presidential-congressional relations; all of Part Five is helpful in understanding the role of the president; most of Part Four concerns Congress; half a dozen selections deal with political parties.

Twelve of the selections in the first edition of this book have been retained unchanged, three more have been shortened or revised, four have been omitted, and twelve new selections have been added. This edition has a stronger emphasis on the executive branch and on interest groups, and includes a new section on political stability and dissent.

There is a great deal about American politics that is not yet known to scholars. These readings reveal not only the advances that have been made in the past generation, but also the vast stretches of ground that must be covered before we will have an adequate understanding of the workings of our political system.

Many people have given me helpful advice on this reader. I am especially indebted to James David Barber, Fred I. Greenstein, Theodore J. Lowi, Nelson W. Polsby, Martin Shapiro, and my students at Stanford University for their comments and suggestions.

Raymond E. Wolfinger

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PART ONE

CONGRESS

When a man is elected to Congress, at least some of his constituents expect him to represent their district's interests. The country as a whole expects him to help legislate and investigate according to the national interest. To do either of these jobs, the congressman must obtain the help of his colleagues, all of whom are also expected to represent local interests and have their own ideas of what will best serve the national interest. Few local interests are similar, and some are conflicting; and needless to say, there are many conceptions of the national interest.

Neither local nor national interests as such are likely to be at the front of the congressman's mind, however. He is probably most worried about such questions as: How can he maintain and improve his political position back home? How can he get the committee assignments he wants? How can he achieve the personal prestige that he must have if he is to be an effective legislator? Perhaps he wants to go from the House to the Senate, or from Congress to the governor's mansion, or even to the White House. Perhaps he is concerned about how he can influence government policies. Here also the help of his colleagues is essential if he wants to achieve his ambitions.

In "The Job of the Congressman" Lewis A. Dexter discusses some of the things that any member of Congress must take into consideration as he goes about his work. This selection, based on several hundred interviews with senators, representatives, congressional staff members, and lobbyists, is taken from a ten-year study of the politics of foreign trade legislation. Dexter describes the incredible work load the congressman bears. There is so much to be done that, paradoxically, his burden gives him a measure of freedom. Because he cannot attend to everything, he must choose where he will concentrate his limited time and energy. This

does not mean, however, that he can act as he pleases; with so many strong-willed men pursuing so many different goals, elaborate rules are necessary if anything is to be accomplished. The formal rules—the committee system, floor procedure, and the like—have been described in most textbooks; but there are also informal rules that are no less important in determining how Congress works and how congressmen behave. Many of these customs are politically loaded: they help some political interests more than they help others. But the fact that the folkways help congressmen grapple with their problems makes them very hard to change. The articles by Richard F. Fenno, Jr. and Ralph K. Huitt are concerned with different aspects of these crucial, unwritten rules.

Fenno's article on the House Appropriations Committee shows that Congress is not an undifferentiated mass, but is made up of many parts which themselves are complex political systems. The Appropriations Committee is a particularly distinctive and cohesive group, with its own rules and customs. Unlike most other committees, which can either produce new legislation or bottle it up, the Appropriations Committee *must* report a series of highly complicated money bills each session, or the government would not function. Not only must the Committee handle a huge work load, but it must also present a united front to the whole House, or see its carefully worked out appropriations upset by every member's attempts to get more money for his district. Therefore Committee disunity cannot easily be tolerated. Fenno describes how the selection process and training undergone by new Committee members instill in them a common "committee" point of view that is distinct from (although not irrelevant to) partisan politics. This unity gives the Committee enormous strength in dealing with other congressmen. Although individual congressmen are often frustrated in their dealings with the Committee, the fact that it continues to be so independent indicates that the arrangement is, on the whole, acceptable to the House.

While Fenno is concerned with the strict folkways of a specialized committee, Huitt looks at the permissive habits of the Senate. His point of departure is the famous characterization of the Senate as dominated by a "club" which admits or rejects other senators on the basis of their conformity to Senate norms. Huitt shows that there are other parts to play in the Senate; that the role of maverick may not be such a dishonored one as many observers have suggested; and that the "outsider's" contribution to the legislative process may be as important as is the "club" member's. These two articles raise an intriguing question: Why is there such harsh intolerance of mavericks in the House Appropriations Committee and such acceptance of them in the Senate?

Traditional theories of representative government assume that a legislator's constituents will vote for or against him on the basis of their opinion of his performance in Congress. In the fourth article Donald

E. Stokes and Warren E. Miller cast doubt on this assumption. They show how little most voters know about the two parties' legislative records, much less the part played by individual congressmen, and suggest some of the reasons for election-day defeats and victories. Their article describes the basic problems and opportunities that comprise the congressman's political environment. Their findings about constituent ignorance reinforce one of Dexter's main points: congressmen are fairly free to make most decisions about not only how they will vote, but also how they will spend their time. The ignorance of most voters is one of the conditions in which interest groups flourish: the scanty knowledge and interest of the majority provide opportunities for alert, intense, well-organized minorities. Examples of how lobbies take advantage of these opportunities are found in Chapters 16 and 17.

CHAPTER ONE

THE JOB OF THE CONGRESSMAN

LEWIS ANTHONY DEXTER

THE JOB OF THE CONGRESSMAN

Choosing a Job

It is a cliché that the main job of a Congressman is to be reelected. There is much truth to it, but there are various ways of getting reelected. Somehow, the Congressman must do things which will secure for him the esteem and/or support of significant elements of his constituency. This he can achieve in many ways. He can seek for himself a reputation as a national leader, which may sometimes impress his constituents. He can work at press relations, creating and stimulating news stories and an image of activity. He can be a local civic leader, attending and speaking at community functions. He can make a reputation for himself in the field of legislation. In some states, he can be a party wheel horse and rely on the organization to back him. He can get people jobs and do social work and favors. He can become a promoter of certain local industries. He can conduct investigations and set himself up as a defender of public morals. He can take well-publicized trips to international hot spots. He can befriend moneyed interests to assure himself a well-financed campaign. He can befriend labor unions, veterans' organizations, or other groups with a numerous clientele and many votes. The one thing he cannot do is much of all these things. He must choose among them; he has to be a certain kind of Congressman.

The reason he must choose is the scarcity of resources. Resources are

Reprinted by permission of the publisher from Raymond A. Bauer, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and Lewis Anthony Dexter, AMERICAN BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY: THE POLITICS OF FOREIGN TRADE *(New York: Atherton Press, 1963), pp. 406–32. Mr. Dexter has taught at a number of universities.*

various; they include time, money, energy, staff, information, and good will. All these have one common characteristic—there is never enough. They must all be budgeted and used with discretion. Opportunity is striking constantly or at least standing outside the door, but it is only occasionally that one has the wherewithal to capitalize on it. The skill of a Congressman is to make the choices which, with the resources at hand, will get him the greatest results in doing the kind of congressional job he has chosen to do. . . .

For these reasons, a rational Congressman who has decided what kind of Congressman he wants to be would then use his resources according to strategies consisting of whole packages of related acts. His stand on a particular issue would be far less dependent on what was specifically involved in that issue than on its role in a general policy or strategy on which he was working. . . .

A skillful Congressman also takes account of the strategies of the other players in the Capitol arena and the rules of the game there. He is part of a multiperson game in which the goals of the different players vary and in which each defines them for himself; in which the pieces are the scarce resources which can be allocated; and in which the optimal strategies depend on the coalitions which can be formed, the procedural rules of the house in which the game is being played, and the power and the goals of the other players. Voting strategies depend on many things besides the pros and cons of issues. A senior Senator, for example, can seek for himself the mantle of statesman with some chance of success, thanks to unlimited debate and his ability to balance special interests in one part of the state against those in another. A Representative has far less chance of playing that particular kind of game. Again, a Congressman can afford to vote the popular position in his constituency although he believes it wrong when he knows that there will be enough congressional votes to defeat him anyway. He may have to vote his principles with courage when he thinks his vote is going to count. But, even then, he may, if skilled at parliamentary procedure, satisfy his constituents by dramatic votes and gestures at moments when they cannot succeed.

How a Congressman defines his job, the importance of choice in the use of his time and resources, the continuing character of Congress as a social system, and the constraints of procedure and interaction form the substance of this section. The Congressman is typically thrust unprepared into a specialized milieu and confronted with a massive volume of highly technical legislation, with most of which he can deal only superficially. Counting on the assistance of a modest staff, he must work within the framework of a committee structure and is burdened with the additional task of servicing myriad personal requests from his con-

stituents. These pressures combine to make time one of the Congressman's most critical resources and the study of its allocation and husbanding a key to the legislative process.

Allocating Time

The scholar tends to approach his problem as though it had equal salience in the minds of men dealing with it on a practical basis. But we have already observed, in our study of the business community, that foreign-trade policy was only one of many issues crying for the American businessman's attention and not one of the most pressing. What has been said of the businessman must be said double of the Congressman. There are infinite demands on him, which he must meet with finite means. Both the scholar and the newsman often miss this point in their assumption that Congressmen can pay attention to all issues of national policy. We began our study with two major interests: legislation and communication. We wanted to know what Congressmen did about tariff legislation, and we wanted to know what and who influenced them in what they did. We tended to assume that the issues of public policy which were crucial to us were as crucial to the men with whom we were talking. Yet, few Congressmen viewed tariff legislation as their primary concern, and the way in which many of them noticed what they read and heard about reciprocal trade was in large part a consequence of the fact that tariff legislation was simply one of several competing interests for them.

The low priority assigned tariff matters and the effect of that on what Congressmen heard and did may be examined by considering their allocation of time. . . . A Congressman is a member of what sociologists call a free profession, in that he makes his working schedule for himself. His job is undefined and free, not only in schedule, but also in content and in standards of achievement. As a result, he lives under a heavy burden of multiple choices, and, what is more, the choices he has to make are far more fateful than those most citizens make. The citizen may conceive of the Congressman tackling his highly responsible choices with the same care and awe with which the citizen imagines himself tackling the few really responsible choices which he makes. But, by the very nature of their busy lives, Congressmen cannot do this.

Let us consider the ways in which a Congressman may occupy his time. He may concentrate on any of the following aspects of his job:

1. Legislative planning—the working out of legislation in committee
2. Legislative criticism—an unpopular role in the House, but one common in the Senate